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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

February 6, 1942

OFFICE OF INFORMATION MEMORANDUM NO. 21

I send attached one copy each of the Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press, and the Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters. As explained in Information Memorandum Number 15, the general principles on which these codes are founded apply also to the issuance of information by government departments. Additional copies of the codes for distribution to your Washington and field offices may be had from my office. Call Pat Condon, branch 5249.

*Marce Balisbury*

Director of Information

Attachments:2



UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT  
OFFICE OF CENSORSHIP

Washington, D. C.



Code of  
WARTIME PRACTICES  
FOR  
*AMERICAN BROADCASTERS*



UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 1942



## CODE OF WARTIME PRACTICES FOR AMERICAN BROADCASTERS

In wartime it is the responsibility of every citizen to help prevent the enemy, insofar as possible, from obtaining war, navy, air, or economic intelligence which might be of value to him and inimical to our national effort.

The broadcasting industry has enlisted with enthusiasm in the endeavor, and the following is intended to be helpful in systematizing cooperation on a voluntary basis during the period of the emergency.

Two possibilities exist:

- (1) Enemy exploitation of stations heard only within our borders, to expedite the work of saboteurs, and
- (2) Enemy exploitation of stations heard internationally (both short and long wave) to transmit vital information.

All American stations desire to prevent such exploitation.

The statement herewith set forth is presented under three headings:

- (1) News programs.
- (2) Ad lib programs.
- (3) Foreign language programs.

Radio management can do much in other ways to win the war. It can act, in the light of experience, as its own censor above and beyond the suggestions contained in this statement of conduct.

### I

#### NEWS PROGRAMS

It must be remembered that all newspapers, magazines and periodicals are censored at our national borders. No such post-publication censorship is possible in radio. Scores of stations operating on all classifications of frequencies are heard clearly in areas outside the United States. These stations especially should exercise skill and caution in preparing news broadcasts.

Ninety-nine percent of the commercial stations operating in the United States are serviced by one or more news agencies. News teletyped to stations and networks by these agencies will be edited at the source, with a view to observing certain requests set down by the press section of the Office of Censorship. These precautions notwithstanding, the Office of Censorship stresses the need for radio to process all news in the light of its own specialized knowledge.

Broadcasters should ask themselves the question "Would this material be of value to me if I were the enemy?" Certain material which may appear on the news service wires as approved for newspapers may not be appropriate for radio.

It is requested that news falling into any of the following classifications be kept off the air, except in cases when the release has been authorized by appropriate authority.

(1) **WEATHER REPORTS.** This category includes temperature readings, barometric pressures, wind directions, forecasts, and all other data relating to weather conditions. Frequently weather reports for use on radio will be authorized by the United States Weather Bureau. This material is permissible. Confirmation should be obtained that the report actually came from the Weather Bureau. Special care should be taken against inadvertent references to weather conditions during sports broadcasts, special events, and similar projects.

Information concerning road conditions, where such information is essential to safeguarding human life, may be broadcast when requested by a Federal, State, or municipal source.

(2) **TROOP MOVEMENTS.** The general character and movements of units of the United States Army, Navy, and Marine Corps, or their personnel, within or without the continental limits of the United States; their location, identity, or exact composition, equipment, or strength; their destination, routes, and schedules; their assembly for embarkation or actual embarkation. Any such information regarding the troops of friendly nations on American soil. (The request as regards location and general character does not apply to training camps in the United States, nor to units assigned to domestic police duty.)

(3) **SHIPS.** The location, movements and identity of naval and merchant vessels of the United States and of other nations opposing the Axis powers and of personnel of such craft; the port and time of arrival of any such vessels; the assembly, departure or arrival of transports or convoys, the existence of mine fields or other harbor defenses; secret orders or other secret instructions regarding lights, buoys, and other guides to navigators; the number, size, character, and location of ships in construction, or advance information as to the date of launchings or commissionings; the physical set-up of existing shipyards, and information regarding construction of new ones.

(4) **PLANES.** The disposition, movements, and strength of army and navy units. The time and location of corps graduations or the equipment strength of any training school.



(5) **EXPERIMENTS.** Any experiments with war equipment or materials, particularly those relating to new inventions. Any news of the whereabouts of camouflaged objects.

(6) **FORTIFICATIONS.** Any information regarding existing or projected fortifications of this country, any information regarding coastal defense emplacements or bomb shelters; location, nature, or numbers of anti-aircraft guns.

(7) **PRODUCTION.** Specific information about war contracts, such as the exact type of production, production schedules, dates of delivery, or progress of production; estimated supplies of strategic and critical materials available; or Nation-wide "round-ups" of locally published procurement data except when such composite information is officially approved for publication. Specific information about the location of, or other information about, sites and factories already in existence, which would aid saboteurs in gaining access to them; information other than that readily gained through observation by the general public, disclosing the location of sites and factories yet to be established, or the nature of their production. Any information about new or secret military designs, or new factory designs for war production.

(8) **CASUALTY LISTS.** Total or round figures issued by the Government may be handled. If there is special newsworthiness in the use of an individual name, such as that attending the release concerning Capt. Colin Kelly, it is permissible material. Stations should use own judgment in using names of important personages from their own areas killed in action. The Government notifies nearest kin BEFORE casualty's name is released to the press.

(9) **SELECTIVE SERVICE.** Release of figures on selective service enrollments.

(10) **UNCONFIRMED REPORTS.** Reports based on information from unidentified sources as to ship sinkings or land troop reverses or successes should not be used. In the event enemy claims have been neither confirmed nor denied by established authority, the story ordinarily should be handled without inclusion of specific information; there should be no mention of ship's name—only its classification; there should be no mention of army unit designation—just its general description (tank, artillery, infantry, etc.). Commentators, through sensible analyses of reports from enemy origins, stressing the obvious fallacies, can do much to correct any false impressions which might be created.

(11) **COMMUNICATIONS.** Information concerning the establishment of new international points of communication should be withheld until officially released by appropriate Federal authority.

(12) **GENERAL.** Information disclosing the new location of national archives, art treasures, and so on, which have been moved for safekeeping; damage to military and naval objectives, including docks, railroads, or commercial airports, resulting from enemy action; transportation of munitions or other war materials, including oil tank cars and trains; movements of the President of the United States, or of official military or diplomatic missions of the United States or of any other nation opposing the Axis powers—routes, schedules, or destination, within or without the continental limits of the United States; movements of ranking army or naval officers and staffs on official business; movements of other individuals or units under special orders of the Army, Navy, or State Department.

Summation: It should be emphasized that there is no objection to any of these topics *if officially released*. These restraints are suggested:

(1) Full and prompt obedience to all lawful requests emanating from constituted authorities. If a broadcaster questions the wisdom of any request, he should take it up with the Office of Censorship.

(2) Exercise of common sense in editing news, meeting new problems with sensible solutions. Stations should feel free at all times to call on the Office of Censorship for clarification of individual problems.

## II

### AD LIB PROGRAMS

Certain program structures do not permit the exercise of complete discretion in predetermining the form they will take on the air. These are the ad lib or informal types of programs. Generally they fall into four classifications:

- (a) Request programs.
- (b) Quiz programs.
- (c) Forums and interviews (*ad lib*).
- (d) Commentaries and descriptions (*ad lib*).

As experience dictates the need of changes, they will be made, and all stations notified. Stations should make certain that their program departments are fully acquainted with these provisions.

(a) **REQUEST PROGRAMS.** Certain safeguards should be adopted by the broadcaster in planning request programs. It is requested that no telephoned or telegraphed requests for musical selections be accepted for the duration of the emergency. It is also requested that all mail bearing requests be held for an unspecified length of time before it is honored on the air. It is suggested that

the broadcaster stagger replies to requests. Care should be exercised in guarding against honoring a given request at a specified time.

Special note is made here of "lost and found" announcements and broadcast material of a similar nature. Broadcasters are asked to refuse acceptance of such material when it is submitted via telephone or telegraph by a private individual. If the case involves a lost person, lost dog, lost property or similar matter, the broadcaster is advised to demand written notice. It is suggested that care be used by station continuity departments in rewriting all such personal advertising. On the other hand, emergency announcements asked by police or other authorized sources may be accepted. Announcements bearing official authorization seeking blood donors, lost persons, stolen cars, and similar material may be accepted by telephone, but confirmation of the source is suggested.

It is requested that announcements of mass meetings not be honored unless they come from an authorized representative of an accredited governmental or civilian agency. Such requests should be accepted only when submitted in writing.

**(b) QUIZ PROGRAMS.** It is requested that all audience-participation type quiz programs originating from remote points, either by wire, transcription or short wave, be discontinued, except as qualified hereinafter.

Any program which permits the public accessibility to an open microphone is dangerous and should be carefully supervised. Because of the nature of quiz programs, in which the public is not only permitted access to the microphone but encouraged to speak into it, the danger of usurpation by the enemy is enhanced. The greatest danger here lies in the informal interview conducted in a small group—10 to 25 people. In larger groups, where participants are selected from a theater audience, for example, the danger is not so great.

Generally speaking, any quiz program originating remotely, wherein the group is small, and wherein no arrangement exists for investigating the background of participants, should be discontinued. Included in this classification are all such productions as man-in-the-street interviews, airport interviews, train terminal interviews, and so forth.

In all studio-audience type quiz shows, where the audience from which interviewees are to be selected numbers less than 50 people, program conductors are asked to exercise special care. They should devise a method whereby no individual seeking participation can be **GUARANTEED PARTICIPATION.**

**(c) FORUMS AND INTERVIEWS.** This refers specifically to forums in which the general public is permitted extemporaneous

comment; to panel discussions in which more than two persons participate; and to interviews conducted by authorized employees of the broadcasting company. Although the likelihood of exploitation here is slight, there are certain forums during which comments are sought "from the floor" or audience, that demand cautious production.

(d) **COMMENTARIES AND DESCRIPTIONS.** (Ad lib). Special events reporters are advised to avoid specific reference to locations and structures in on-the-spot broadcasts following air raids or other enemy offensive action. Both such reporters and commentators should beware of using any descriptive material which might be employed by the enemy in plotting an area for attack.

*The broadcaster, in summary, is asked to remember that there is need for extraordinary care, especially in cases where he or his authorized representative is not in full control of the program.*

### III

#### FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

It is requested that full transcripts, either written or recorded, be kept of all foreign language programs; it is suggested that broadcasters take all necessary precautions to prevent deviation from script by foreign language announcers and performers. ("Foreign language" is here taken to mean any language other than English.)

#### MISCELLANEOUS

From time to time, the Office of Censorship may find it necessary to issue further communications, which will either interpret certain existing requests, amend or delete them, establish new ones or cover special emergency conditions.

These communications will be addressed to managers of radio stations and networks. They should have preferential handling and it is therefore advisable that certain alternate executives be appointed to execute them in the absence of the regularly constituted authority. All such communications will be coded in numerical order, i. e.: R-1; R-2; R-3; etc. Stations are advised to keep them in careful filing order.

The American broadcasting industry's greatest contribution to victory will be the use of good common sense. Too frequently radio in general instead of the individual offender is blamed for even the most minor dereliction. If material is doubtful, it should not be used; submit it to the Office of Censorship for review. Free speech will not suffer during this emergency period beyond the absolute precautions which are necessary to the protection of a culture which makes our radio the freest in the world.



Broadcasters are asked merely to exercise restraint in the handling of news that might be damaging, for the army behind the army represents a great force in the war effort. Radio is advised to steer clear of dramatic programs which attempt to portray the horrors of combat; to avoid sound effects which might be mistaken for air raid alarms. Radio is one of the greatest liaison officers between the fighting front and the people. Its voice will speak the news first. It should speak wisely and calmly. In short, radio is endowed with a rich opportunity to keep America entertained and interested, and that opportunity should be pursued with vigor.

THE OFFICE OF CENSORSHIP,  
BYRON PRICE, *Director*.

JANUARY 15, 1942.









UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT  
OFFICE OF CENSORSHIP  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

# CODE OF WARTIME PRACTICES

*For the American Press*

UNITED STATES  
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON : 1942



## CODE OF WARTIME PRACTICES

This statement responds to the many inquiries received by the Office of Censorship, asking for an outline of newspaper and magazine practices which the Government feels are desirable for the effective prosecution of the war.

It is essential that certain basic facts be understood from the beginning.

The first of these facts is that the outcome of the war is a matter of vital personal concern to the future of every American citizen. The second is that the security of our armed forces and even of our homes and our liberties will be weakened in greater or less degree by every disclosure of information which will help the enemy.

If every member of every news staff and contributing writer will keep these two facts constantly in mind, and then will follow the dictates of common sense, he will be able to answer for himself many of the questions which might otherwise trouble him. In other words, a maximum of accomplishment will be attained if editors will ask themselves with respect to any given detail, "Is this information I would like to have if I were the enemy?" and then act accordingly.

The result of such a process will hardly represent "business as usual" on the news desks of the country. On the contrary, it will mean some sacrifice of the journalistic enterprise of ordinary times. But it will not mean a news or editorial black-out. It is the hope and expectation of the Office of Censorship that the columns of American publications will remain the freest in the world, and will tell the story of our national successes and shortcomings accurately and in much detail.

The highly gratifying response of the press so far proves that it understands the need for temporary sacrifice, and is prepared to make that sacrifice in the spirit of the President's recent assurance that such curtailment as may be necessary will be administered "in harmony with the best interests of our free institutions."

Below is a summary covering specific problems. This summary repeats, with some modifications, requests previously made by various agencies of the Federal Government, and it may be regarded as superseding and consolidating all of those requests.

Special attention is directed to the fact that all of the requests in the summary are modified by a proviso that the information listed may properly be published when authorized by appropriate authority.

News on all of these subjects will become available from Government sources; but in war, timeliness is an important factor, and the Government unquestionably is in the best position to decide when disclosure is timely.

The specific information which newspapers and magazines are asked not to publish *except when such information is made available officially by appropriate authority* falls into the following classes:

### TROOPS

The general character and movements of United States Army, Navy, or Marine Corps units, within or without the continental limits of the United States—their location, identity, or exact composition, equipment, or strength; their destination, routes, and schedules; their assembly for embarkation, prospective embarkation, or actual embarkation. Any such information regarding the troops of friendly nations on American soil.

NOTE.—The request as regards location and general character does not apply to troops in training camps in continental United States, nor to units assigned to domestic police duty.

### SHIPS

The location, movements, and identity of naval and merchant vessels of the United States in any waters, and of other nations opposing the Axis powers, in American waters; the port and time of arrival or prospective arrival of any such vessels, or the port from which they leave; the nature of cargoes of such vessels; the location of enemy naval or merchant vessels in or near American waters; the assembly, departure or arrival of transports or convoys; the existence of mine fields or other harbor defense; secret orders or other secret instructions regarding lights, buoys, and other guides to navigators; the number, size, character, and location of ships in construction, or advance information as to the date of launchings or commissionings; the physical set-up or technical details of shipyards.

### PLANES

The disposition, movements, and strength of Army or Navy air units.

### FORTIFICATIONS

The location of forts and other fortifications; the location of coast-defense emplacements, or antiaircraft guns; their nature and number; location of bomb shelters; location of camouflaged objects.

## PRODUCTION

Specific information about war contracts, such as the exact type of production, production schedules, dates of delivery, or progress of production; estimated supplies of strategic and critical materials available; or Nation-wide "round-ups" of locally published procurement data except when such composite information is officially approved for publication.

Specific information about the location of, or other information about, sites and factories already in existence, which would aid saboteurs in gaining access to them; information other than that readily gained through observation by the general public, disclosing the location of sites and factories yet to be established, or the nature of their production.

Any information about new or secret military designs, or new factory designs for war production.

## WEATHER

Weather forecasts, other than officially issued by the Weather Bureau; the routine forecasts printed by any single newspaper to cover only the State in which it is published and not more than four adjoining States, portions of which lie within a radius of 150 miles from the point of publication.

Consolidated temperature tables covering more than 20 stations, in any one newspaper.

NOTE.—Special forecasts issued by the Weather Bureau warning of unusual conditions, or special reports issued by the Weather Bureau concerning temperature tables, or news stories warning the public of dangerous roads or streets, within 150 miles of the point of publication, are all acceptable for publication.

Weather "round-up" stories covering actual conditions throughout more than one State, except when given out by the Weather Bureau.

## PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS

Photographs conveying the information specified in this summary, unless officially approved for publication.

Detailed maps or photographs disclosing location of munition dumps, or other restricted Army or Naval areas.

NOTE.—This has no reference to maps showing the general theater of war, or large-scale zones of action, movements of contending forces on a large scale, or maps showing the general ebb and flow of battle lines.

NOTE.—Special care should be exercised in the publication of aerial photos presumably of nonmilitary significance, which might reveal military or other information helpful to the enemy; also care should be exercised in publishing casualty photos so as not to reveal unit identifications through collar ornaments, etc. Special attention is directed to the section of this summary covering information about damage to military objectives.

## GENERAL

## Casualty lists.

NOTE.—There is no objection to publication of information about casualties from a newspaper's local field, obtained from nearest of kin, but it is requested that in such cases, specific military and naval units, and exact locations, be not mentioned.

Information disclosing the new location of national archives, art treasures, and so on, which have been moved for safekeeping.

Information about damage to military and naval objectives, including docks, railroads, or commercial airports, resulting from enemy action.

NOTE.—The spread of rumors in such a way that they will be accepted as facts will render aid and comfort to the enemy. It is suggested that enemy claims of ship sinkings, or of other damage to our forces, be weighed carefully and the source clearly identified, if published.

Information about the transportation of munitions or other war materials, including oil tank cars and trains.

Information about the movements of the President of the United States, or of official military or diplomatic missions of the United States or of any other nation opposing the Axis powers—routes, schedules, or destination, within or without the continental limits of the United States; movements of ranking Army or naval officers and staffs on official business; movements of other individuals or units under special orders of the Army, Navy, or State Department.

NOTE.—Advertising matter, letters to the editor, interviews with men on leave, columns, and so on, are included in the above requests, both as to text and illustration.

If information should be made available anywhere which seems to come from doubtful authority, or to be in conflict with the general aims of these requests; or if special restrictions requested locally or otherwise by various authorities seem unreasonable or out of harmony with this summary, it is recommended that the question be submitted at once to the Office of Censorship.

In addition, if any newspaper, magazine, or other agency or individual handling news or special articles desires clarification or advice as to what disclosures might or might not aid the enemy, the Office of Censorship will cooperate gladly. Such inquiries should be addressed to the Office of Censorship, Washington.

Should additions or modifications of this summary seem feasible and desirable from time to time, the industry will be advised.

THE OFFICE OF CENSORSHIP,  
BYRON PRICE, *Director*.

JANUARY 15, 1942.

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